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A DRAMATIC PIECE.—BY RICHARD BRINSLEY SHERIDAN,



Whisk.—"OH, HATIFUL LIBERTY, IF THUS IN VAIN," &c.—Act ii, scene 1.

Persons Represented.

PUFF.
DANGLE.

SNEER.
SIR FRETFUL PLAGIARY.

PROMPTER, &c.
MRS. DANGLE.

CHARACTERS IN THE TRAGEDY.

LORD BURLEIGH.
GOVERNOR OF TILBURY FORT.
EARL OF LEICESTER.
SIR WALTER RALEIGH.

SIR CHRISTOPHER HATTON.
MASTER OF THE HORSE.
BEEF-EATER.
DON FEROL-
WHISKERANDOS.

TILBURINA.
THE TWO, NICES.
CONFIDANTE.
GUARDS, SOLDIERS, &c.

ACT I,

SCENE I.—MR. and MRS. DANGLE at breakfast,
and reading newspapers.—*Dangle reading.*

'Brutus to Lord North.'—'Letter the Second on
'the State of the Army.'—'Psha! 'To the first L
'dash D of the A dash Y.'—'Genuine Extract of a
'Letter from St. Kitt's.'—'Coxheath intelligence.'—
'It is now confidently asserted that Sir Charles
'Hardy.'—'Psha!—Nothing but about the fleet and
the nation!—and I hate all politics but theatrical.—
Where's the Morning Chronicle?

Mrs. D. Yes, that's your Gazette.
Dan. So, here we have it.—*Theatrical intelligence*
'extraordinary.—We hear there is a new tragedy in
'rehearsal at Drury-lane theatre, called the Spanish
'Armada, said to be written by Mr. Puff, a gentle-
'man well known to the theatrical world. If we
'may allow ourselves to give credit to the report of
'the performers, who, truth to say, are in general
'but indifferent judges, this piece abounds with the
'most striking and received beauties of modern
'composition.'—So I am very glad my friend Puff's
tragedy is in such forwardness. *Mrs. Dangle,* my

THE CRITIC; OR, A TRAGEDY REHEARSED.

dear, you will be very glad to hear that Puff's tragedy—

Mrs. D. Lord! Mr. Dangle, why will you plague me about such nonsense? Now the plays are begun, I shall have no peace. Isn't it sufficient to make yourself ridiculous by your passion for the theatre, without continually teasing me to join you? Why can't you ride your hobby horse, without desiring to place me on a pillion behind you, Mr. Dangle?

Dan. Nay, my dear; I was only going to read—

Mrs. D. No, no; you will never read anything that's worth listening to; you hate to hear about your country; there are letters every day with Roman signatures, demonstrating the certainty of an invasion, and proving that the nation is utterly undone. But you never will read anything to entertain one.

Dan. What has a woman to do with politics, Mrs. Dangle?

Mrs. D. And what have you to do with the theatre, Mr. Dangle? Why should you affect the character of a critic? I have no patience with you! Haven't you made yourself the jest of all your acquaintance by your interference in matters where you have no business? Are you not called a theatrical quidnunc, and a mock Mæconas to second-hand authors?

Dan. True; my power with the managers is pretty notorious; but is it no credit to have applications from all quarters for my interest? From lords to recommend fiddlers, from ladies to get boxes, from authors to get answers, and from actors to get engagements?

Mrs. D. Yes, truly; you have contrived to get a share in all the plague and trouble of theatrical property, without the profit, or even the credit of the abuse that attends it.

Dan. I am sure, Mrs. Dangle, you are no loser by it, however; you have all the advantages of it: mightn't you, last winter, have had the reading of the new pantomime a fortnight previous to its performance? And doesn't Mr. Spring let you take places for a play before it is advertised, and set you down for a box for every new piece through the season? And didn't my friend, Mr. Smatter, dedicate his last farce to you at my particular request, Mrs. Dangle?

Mrs. D. Yes; but wasn't the farce damn'd, Mr. Dangle? And to be sure, it is extremely pleasant to have one's house made the motley rendezvous of all the lacqueys of literature: the very high 'change of trading authors and jobbing criticals; my drawing room is an absolute register-office for candidate actors, and poets without character. Then to be continually alarmed with misses and ma'am's piping hysteric changes on Juliets and Dorindas, Pollys and Ophelias; and the very furniture trembling at the probationary starts and unprovoked rants of would-be Richards and Hamlets! And what is worse than all, now that the managers have monopoliz'd the opera-house, haven't we the Signors and the Signoras calling here, sliding their smooth semibreves, and gargling glib divisions in their outlandish throats; with foreign emissaries and French spies, for aught I know, disguised like fiddlers and figure dancers!

Dan. Mercy! Mrs. Dangle!

Mrs. D. And to employ yourself so idly at such an alarming crisis as this too, when, if you had the least spirit, you would have been at the head of one of the Westminster associations; or tralling a volunteer pike in the Artillery Ground. But you—

o' my conscience, I believe if the French were landed to-morrow, your first inquiry would be, whether they had brought a theatrical troop with them.

Dan. Mrs. Dangle, it does not signify. I say the stage is 'the mirror of nature,' and the actors are 'the abstract and brief chronicles of the time;'—and pray what can a man of sense study better? Besides, you will not easily persuade me that there is no credit or importance in being at the head of a band of critics, who take upon them to decide for the whole town, whose opinion and patronage all writers solicit, and whose recommendation no manager dares refuse!

Mrs. D. Ridiculous! Both managers and authors of the least merit laugh at your pretensions. The public is their critic, without whose fair approbation they know no play can rest on the stage, and with whose applause they welcome such attacks as yours, and laugh at the malice of them, where they can't at the wit.

Dan. Very well, madam; very well.

Enter Servant.

Serv. Mr. Smeer, sir, to wait on you.

Dan. O! shew Mr. Smeer up. [*Exit Servant.*] Plague on't, now we must appear loving and affectionate, or Smeer will hitch us into a story.

Mrs. D. With all my heart; you can't be more ridiculous than you are.

Dan. You are enough to provoke—

Enter SNEER.

Ha! my dear Smeer, I am vastly glad to see you. My dear, here's Mr. Smeer.

Mrs. D. Good morning to you, sir.

Dan. Mrs. Dangle and I have been diverting ourselves with the papers. Pray, Smeer, won't you go to Drury-lane theatre the first night of Puff's tragedy.

Smeer. Yes; but I suppose one shan't be able to get in; for on the first night of a new piece they always fill the house with orders to support it. But here, Dangle, I have brought you two pieces, one of which you must exert yourself to make the managers accept; I can tell you that; for 'tis written by a person of consequence.

Dan. So; now my plagues are beginning.

Smeer. Ay! I am glad of it, for now you'll be happy. Why, my dear Dangle, it is a pleasure to see how you enjoy your volunteer fatigue, and your solicited solicitations.

Dan. It's a great trouble;—yet, egad! it's pleasant too. Why, sometimes of a morning, I have a dozen people call on me at breakfast time, whose faces I never saw before, nor ever desire to see again.

Smeer. That must be very pleasant indeed!

Dan. And not a week but I receive fifty letters, and not a line in them about any business of my own.

Smeer. An amusing correspondence!

Dan. [*Reading.*] 'Bursts into tears, and exits. What is this? a tragedy?'

Smeer. No, that's a genteel comedy; not a translation, only taken from the French; it is written in a style which they have lately tried to run down; the true sentimental, and nothing ridiculous in it from the beginning to end.

Mrs. D. Well, if they had kept to that, I should not have been such an enemy to the stage; there was some edification to be got from those pieces. Mr. Smeer

Smeer. I am quite of your opinion, Mrs. Dangle,

the theatre, in proper hands, might certainly be made the school of morality; but now, I am sorry to say it, people seem to go there principally for their entertainment.

Mrs. D. It would have been more to the credit of the managers to have kept it in the other line.

Sneer. Undoubtedly, madam;—and hereafter, perhaps, to have it recorded, that in the midst of a luxurious and dissipated age, they preserved two houses in the capital, where the conversation was always moral, at least, if not entertaining!

Dan. Now, egad! I think the worst alteration is in the nicety of the audience. No double entendre, no smart inuendo, admitted, even Vanbrugh and Congreve obliged to undergo a bungling reformation!

Sneer. Yes; and our prudery in this respect is just on a par with the artificial bashfulness of a courtesan, who increases the blush upon her cheek in an exact proportion to the diminution of her modesty.

Dan. Sneer can't even give the public a good word!—But what have we here? This seems very odd—

Sneer. O! that's a comedy, on a very new plan; replete with wit and mirth, yet of a most serious moral! You see it is called "the Reformed House-breaker;" where, by the mere force of humour, house-breaking is put into so ridiculous a light, that if the piece has its proper run, I have no doubt, but that bolts and bars will be entirely useless by the end of the season.

Dan. Egad! this is new indeed!

Sneer. Yes; it is written by a particular friend of mine, who has discovered that the follies and foibles of society are subjects unworthy the notice of the comic muse, who should be taught to stoop only at the greater vices and blacker crimes of humanity;—gibbeting capital offences in five acts, and pillorying petty leaches in two. In short, his idea is to dramatize the penal laws, and make the stage a court of case to the Old Bailey.

Dan. It is truly moral.

Enter Servant.

Serv. Sir Fretful Plagiary, sir.

Dan. Beg him to walk up. [*Exit. Servant.*] Now, Mrs. Dangle, Sir Fretful Plagiary is an author to your own taste.

Mrs. D. I confess he is a favourite of mine, because every body else abuses him.

Sneer. Very much to the credit of your charity, madam, if not of your judgment.

Dan. But egad! he allows no merit to any author but himself; that's the truth on't;—though he's my friend.

Sneer. Never. He is as envious as an old maid verging on the desperation of six-and-thirty; and then the insidious humility, with which he seduces you to give a free opinion on any of his works, can be exceeded only by the petulant arrogance with which he is sure to reject your observations.

Dan. Very true, egad!—though he's my friend.

Sneer. Then his affected contempt of all newspaper strictures; though, at the same time, he is the sorest man alive, and shrinks like scorched parchment from the fiery ordeal of true criticism; yet he is so covetous of popularity, that he had rather be abused than not mentioned at all.

Dan. There's no denying it;—though he is my friend.

Sneer. You've read the tragedy he has just finished, haven't you?

Dan. O yes! He sent it to me yesterday.

Sneer. Well, and you think it execrable, don't you?

Dan. Why, between ourselves, egad! I must own—though he's my friend—that it is one of the most—he's here!—*(Aside)*—finished and admirable perform—

Sir F. *(Without.)* Mr. Sneer with him, did you say?

Enter SIR FRETFUL PLAGIARY.

Dan. Ah, my dear friend!—Egad! we were just speaking of your tragedy. Admirable, Sir Fretful, admirable!

Sneer. You never did anything beyond it, Sir Fretful;—never in your life.

Sir F. You make me extremely happy; for, without a compliment, my dear Sneer, there is not a man in the world whose judgment I value as I do yours;—and Mr. Dangle's.

Mrs. D. They are only laughing at you, Sir Fretful; for it was but just now that—

Dan. Mrs. Dangle!—Ah! Sir Fretful, you know Mrs. Dangle. My friend Sneer was rallying just now. He knows how she admires you, and—

Sir F. O Lord! I am sure Mr. Sneer has more taste and sincerity than to—A d—d double-faced fellow!

Dan. Yes, yes,—Sneer will jest, but a better humour'd—

Sir F. O! I know.

Dan. He has a ready turn for ridicule, his wits cost him nothing.

Sir F. No, egad! or I should wonder how he came by it.

Mrs. D. Because his jest is always at the expense of his friend.

Dan. But, Sir Fretful, have you sent your play to the managers yet? or can I be of any service to you?

Sir F. No, no, I thank you; I believe the piece had sufficient recommendation with it. I thank you, though—I sent it to the manager of Covent Garden theatre this morning.

Sneer. I should have thought, now, that it might have been cast (as the actors call it) better at Drury Lane.

Sir F. O lud! no—never send a play there while I live. Hark ye!

(Whispers Sneer.)

Sneer. Writes himself!—I know he does—

Sir F. I say nothing; I take away from no man's merit—am hurt at no man's good fortune. I say nothing—but this I will say—through all my knowledge of life, I have observed—that there is not a passion so strongly rooted in the human heart as envy!

Sneer. I believe you have reasons for what you say, indeed.

Sir F. Besides, I can tell you it is not always so safe to leave a play in the hands of those who write themselves.

Sneer. What! they may steal from them, eh? my dear Plagiary?

Sir F. Steal! to be sure they may; and egad! serve your best thoughts as gipsies do stolen children, disfigure them to make 'em pass for their own.

Sneer. But your present work is a sacrifice to Melpomene: and he you know, never—

Sir F. That's no security. A dextrous plagiarist may do anything. Why, sir, for aught I know, he might take out some of the best things in my tragedy, and put them into his own comedy.

Sneer. That might be done, I dare be sworn.

Sir F. And then, if such a person gives you the least hint or assis tance, he is devilish apt to take the merit of the whole.

Dan. If it succeeds.

Sir F. Ay! but with regard to this piece, I think I can hit that gentleman, for I can safely swear he never read it.

Sneer. I'll tell you how you may hurt him more.

Sir F. How?

Sneer. Swear he wrote it.

Sir F. Plague on't now, Sneer; I shall take it ill. I believe you want to take away my character as an author.

Sneer. Then I am sure you ought to be very much obliged to me.

Sir F. Eh!—sir!

Dan. O! you know he never means what he says.

Sir F. Sincerely then, do you like the piece?

Sneer. Wonderfully!

Sir F. But come now, there must be something that you think might be mended, eh? Mr. Dangle, has nothing struck you?

Dan. Why faith, it is but an ungracious thing for the most part to—

Sir F. With most authors it is just so indeed; they are in general strangely tenacious; but, for my part, I am never so well pleased as when a judicious critic points out any defect to me; for what is the purpose of showing a work to a friend, if you don't mean to profit by his opinion?

Sneer. Very true. Why then, though I seriously admire the piece upon the whole, yet there is one small objection, which, if you'll give me leave, I'll mention.

Sir F. Sir, you can't oblige me more.

Sneer. I think it wants incident.

Sir F. Good God!—you surprise me!—wants incident!

Sneer. Yes; I own I think the incidents are too few.

Sir F. Good God! Believe me, Mr. Sneer, there is no person for whose judgment I have a more implicit deference, but I protest to you, Mr. Sneer, I am only apprehensive that the incidents are too crowded. My dear Dangle, how does it strike you?

Dan. Really, I can't agree with my friend Sneer. I think the plot quite sufficient; and the four first acts by many degrees the best I ever read or saw in my life. If I might venture to suggest anything, it is that the interest rather falls off in the fifth.

Sir F. Rises, I believe you mean, sir.

Dan. No; I don't, upon my word.

Sir F. Yes, yes, you do, upon my soul; it certainly don't fall off, I assure you; no, no, it don't fall off.

Dan. Now, Mrs. Dangle, didn't you say it struck you in the same light?

Mrs. D. No, indeed, I did not: I did not see a fault in any part of the play, from the beginning to the end.

Sir F. Upon my soul, the women are the best judges after all.

Mrs. D. Or if I made any objection, I am sure it was to nothing in the piece; but that I was afraid it was, on the whole, a little too long.

Sir F. Pray, madam, do you speak as to a duration of time; or do you mean that the story is tediously spun out?

Mrs. D. O lud! no. I speak only with reference to the usual length of acting plays.

Sir F. Then I am very happy.—very happy indeed,—because the play is a short play, a remarkable short play: I should not venture to differ with a lady on a point of taste; but, on these occasions, the watch, you know, is the cri ic.

Mrs. D. Then, I suppose, it must have been Mr. Dangle's drawing manner of reading it to me.

Sir F. O! if Mr. Dangle read it that's quite another affair; but I assure you, Mrs. Dangle, the first evening you can spare me three hours and a half, I'll undertake to read you the whole from beginning to end, with the prologue and epilogue, and allow time for the music between the acts.

Mrs. D. I hope to see it on the stage next.

[*Erit.*]

Dan. Well, Sir Fretful, I wish you may be able to get rid as easily of the newspaper criticisms as you do of ours.

Sir F. The newspapers!—sir, they are the most villainous—licentious—abominable—inferral—not that I ever read them—no; I make it a rule never to look into a newspaper.

Dan. You are quite right; for it certainly must hurt an author of delicate feelings to see the liberties they take.

Sir F. No; quite the contrary: their abuse is, in fact, the best panegyric; I like it of all things. An author's reputation is only in danger from their support.

Sneer. Why, that's true; and that attack now on you the other day—

Sir F. What? where?

Dan. Ay! you mean in a paper of Thursday; it was completely ill-natured, to be sure.

Sir F. O! so much the better; ha! ha! ha!—I wouldn't have it otherwise.

Dan. Certainly it is only to be laughed at; for—
Sir F. You don't happen to recollect what the fellow said, do you?

Sneer. Pray, Dangle: Sir Fretful seems a little anxious—

Sir F. O lud, no! anxious,—not I,—not the least—I—but one may as well hear, you know.

Dan. Sneer, do you recollect? Make out something.

[*Aside.*]

Sneer. I will. (*To Dangle.* Yes, yes, I remember perfectly.

Sir F. Well, and pray now; not that it signifies; what might the gentleman say?

Sneer. Why, he roundly asserts that you have not the slightest invention, or original genius whatever; though you are the greatest traducer of all other authors living.

Sir F. Ha, ha, ha! very good!

Sneer. That as to comedy, you have not one idea of your own, he believes, even in your commonplace book, where s ray jokes and pilfered witticisms are kept with as much method as the ledger of the lost and stolen office.

Sir F. Ha, ha, ha! very pleasant!

Sneer. Nay, that you are so unlucky as not to have the skill even to steal with taste;—but that you glean from the refuse of obscure volumes, where more judicious plagiarists have been before you; so that the body of your work is a composition of dregs and sediments, like a bad tavern's worst wine.

Sir F. Ha, ha!

Sneer. In your more serious efforts, he says, your bombast would be less intolerable, if the thoughts were ever suited to the expression; but the homeliness of the sentiment stares through the fantastical

incombrance of its fine language, like a clown in one of the new uniforms.

Sir F. Ha, ha!

Sneer. That your occasional tropes and flowers suit the general coarseness of your style, as tambour sprigs would a ground of linsey-woolsey; while your imitations of Shakspeare resemble the mimicry of Falstaff's page, and are about as near the standard of the original.

Sir F. Ha!

Sneer. In short, that even the finest passages you steal are of no service to you; for the poverty of your own language prevents their assimilating; so that they lie on the surface like lumps of marl on a barren moor, encumbering what it is not in their power to fertilize.

Sir F. (After great agitation.) Now, another person would be vex'd at this.

Sneer. Oh! but I wouldn't have told you, only to divert you.

Sir F. I know it. I am diverted; ha, ha, ha!—ha!—not the least in vention! ha, ha, ha! very good—very good!

Sneer. Yes,—no genius! ha! ha! ha!

Dan. A severe rogue! ha! ha; ha! but you are quite right, Sir Fretful, never to read such nonsense.

Sir F. To be sure;—for if there is anything to one's praise, it is a foolish vanity to be gratified at it; and if it is abuse,—why one is always sure to hear of it from some d—d good-natured friend or other!

Enter Servant.

Serv. Mr. Puff, sir, has set word that the last rehearsal is to be this morning, and he'll call on you presently.

Dan. That's true: I shall certainly be at home. [*Exit Servant.*] Now, Sir Fretful, if you have a mind to have justice done you in the way of answer, egad! sir Puff's your man.

Sir F. Psha! sir, why should I wish to have it answered, when I tell you I am pleas'd at it?

Dan. True, I had forgotten that. But I hope you are not fretted at what Mr. Sneer—

Sir F. Zounds! no, Mr. Dangle; don't I tell you these things never fret me in the least?

Dan. Nay, I only thought—

Sir F. And let me tell you, Mr. Dangle, 'tis d—d affronting in you to suppose that I am hurt, when I tell you I am not.

Sneer. But why so warm, Sir Fretful?

Sir F. Gadslife! Mr. Sneer, you are as absurd as Dangle; how often must I repeat it to you, that nothing can vex me but your supposing it possible for me to mind the damn'd nonsense you have been repeating to me;—and let me tell you, if you continue to believe this, you must mean to insult me, gentlemen; and then your disrespect will affect me no more than the newspaper criticisms; and I shall treat it—with exactly the same calm indifference and philosophic contempt;—and so, your servant. [*Exit.*]

Sneer. Ha, ha, ha! poor sir Fretful! Now will he go and vent his philosophy in anonymous abuse of all modern critics and authors. But, Dangle, you must get your friend Puff to take me to the rehearsal of his tragedy.

Dan. I'll answer for't, he'll thank you for desiring it.

Serv. I am at your disposal the whole morning.

Dan. Faith, Sneer, though, I am afraid we were a little too severe on Sir Fretful; though he is my friend.

Sneer. Why, 'tis certain, that unnecessarily to mortify the vanity of any writer, is a cruelty which mere dulness never can deserve; but where a base and personal malignity usurps the place of literary emulation, the aggressor deserves neither quarter nor pity.

~~*Dan.* That's true, egad! though he's my friend!~~

Re-enter Servant.

Serv. Mr. Puff, sir.

[*Exit.*]

Dan. My dear Puff!

Enter PUFF.

Puff. My dear Dangle, how is it with you?

Dan. Mr. Sneer, give me leave to introduce Mr. Puff to you.

Puff. Mr. Sneer is this? Sir, he is a gentleman whom I have long panted for the honour of knowing; a gentleman whose critical talents and transcendent judgment—

Sneer. Dear sir—

Dan. Nay, don't be modest, Sneer; my friend Puff only talks to you in the style of his profession.

Sneer. His profession!

Puff. Yes, sir; I make no secret of the trade I follow, among friends and brother authors. Dangle knows I love to be frank on the subject, and to advertise myself *à la voce*. I am, sir, a practitioner in panegyric; or, to speak more plainly, a professor of the art of puffing, at your service, or anybody else's.

Sneer. Sir, you are very obliging. I believe, Mr. Puff, I have often admired your talents in the daily prints.

Puff. Yes, sir; I flatter myself I do as much business in that way, as any six of the fraternity in town. Devilish hard work all the summer, friend Dangle! Never worked harder! But, harkye!—the winter managers were a little sore, I believe.

Dan. No: I believe they took it all in good part.

Puff. Ay!—then that must have been affection in them; for, egad! there were some of the attacks which there was no laughing at!

Sneer. Ay! the humorous ones; but I should think, Mr. Puff, that authors would in general be able to do this sort of work for themselves.

Puff. Why, yes; but in a clumsy way. Besides, we look on that as an encroachment, and so take the opposite side. I dare say, now, you conceive half the very civil paragraphs and advertisements you see, to be written by the parties concerned, or their friends? No such thing; nine out of ten, manufactured by me in the way of business.

Sneer. Indeed!

Puff. Even the auctioneers now—the auctioneers, I say, though the rogues have lately got some credit for their language—not an article of the merit theirs! Take them out of their pulpits, and they are as dull as catalogues! No, sir; 'twas I first enriched their style; 'twas I first taught them to crowd their advertisements with panegyric superlatives, each epithet rising above the other—like the bidders in their own auction-rooms! From me they learned to infuse their phraseology with variegated chips of exotic metaphor;—by me, too, their inventive faculties were called forth. Yes, sir, by me they were instructed to clothe ideal walls with gratuitous fruits; to insinuate obsequious rivulets into visionary groves; to teach courteous shrubs to nod their approbation of the grateful soil; or, on emergencies, to raise upstart oaks, where there never had been an acorn; to create a delightful vicinage without the assistance of a neighbour;

Sneer. No scandal about Queen Elizabeth, I hope?

Puff. O tude! no no. I only suppose the governor of Tilbury Fort's daughter to be in love with the son of the Spanish admiral.

Sneer. Oh! is that all?

Dan. Excellent, 'faith! I see it at once. But won't this appear rather improbable?

Puff. To be sure it will. But what the plague! a play is not to shew occurrences that happen every day, but things just so strange, that though they never did, they might happen.

Sneer. Certainly, nothing is unnatural that is not physically impossible.

Puff. Very true; and for that matter, Don Ferolo Whiskerandos—for that's the lover's name—might have been over here in the train of the Spanish ambassador; or Tilburina,—for that is the lady's name—might have been in love with him, from having heard his character, or seen his picture; or from knowing that he was the last man in the world, she ought to be in love with—or for any other good female reason. However, sir, the fact is, that though she is but a knight's daughter, egad! she is in love like any princess!

Dan. Poor young lady: I feel for her already! for I can conceive how great the conflict must be between her passion and her duty; her love for her country, and her love for Don Ferolo Whiskerandos!

Puff. O amazing! Her poor susceptible heart is swayed to and fro by contending passions, like—

Enter Under Prompter.

Under P. Sir, the scene is set, and every thing is ready to begin, if you please.

Puff. Egad! then we'll lose no time.

Under P. Though I believe, sir, you will find it very short, for all the performers have profited by the kind permission you granted them.

Puff. Eh! what!

Under P. You know, sir, you gave them leave to cut out or omit whatever they found heavy or unnecessary to the plot; and I must own they have taken very liberal advantage of your indulgence.

Puff. Well, well. They are in general very good judges; and I know I am luxuriant. Now, Mr. Hopkins, as soon as you please.

Under P. (To the music.) Gentlemen, will you play a few bars of something, just to—

Puff. Ay, that's right;—for we have the scenes and dresses, egad! we'll go to't, as if it was the first night's performance; but you need not mind stopping between the acts. [*Exit Under Prompter. Orchestra plays.—Then the bell rings.*] So! stand clear, gentlemen. Now you know there will be a cry of down! down!—hats off!—silence!—Then up curtain, and let us see what our painters have done for us. (*The curtain rises, and discovers Tilbury Fort.—Two sentinels asleep.*)

Dan. Tilbury Fort! Very fine indeed!

Puff. Now, what do you think I open with?

Sneer. Faith! I can't guess.

Puff. A clock. Hark! (*Clock strikes.*) I open with a clock striking, to begot an awful attention in the audience; it also marks the time, which is four o'clock in the morning, and saves a description of the rising sun, and a great deal about gliding the eastern hemisphere.

Dan. But pray, are the sentinels to be asleep?

Puff. Fast as watchmen.

Sneer. Isn't that odd, though, at such an alarming crisis?

Puff. To be sure it is; but smaller things must give way to a striking scene at the opening; that's a rule. And the case is, that two great men are coming to this very spot to begin the piece; now, it is not to be supposed they would open their lips, if these fellows were watching them; so, egad! I must either have them sent off their posts, or set them asleep.

Sneer. O, that accounts for it! But tell us, who are these coming?

Puff. These are they,—Sir Walter Raleigh, and Sir Christopher Hatton. You'll know Sir Christopher, by his turning out his toes; famous, you know, for his dancing. I like to preserve all the little traits of character. Now attend. (*Dangle and Sneer seat themselves.*)

Enter SIR WALTER RALEIGH and SIR CHRISTOPHER HATTON.

'Sir C. True, gallant Raleigh!—

Dan. What! they had been talking before?

Puff. O, yes! all the way as they came along.—I beg pardon, gentlemen, (*to the Actors*), but these are particular friends of mine, whose remarks may be of great service to us. Don't mind interrupting them whenever anything strikes you. (*To Sneer and Dangle.*)

'Sir C. True, gallant Raleigh!

'But O, thou champion of thy country's fame,

'There is a question which I yet must ask;

'A question, which I never ask'd before;—

'What mean these mighty armaments?

'This general muster?—And this throng of chiefs?'

Sneer. Pray, Mr. Puff, how came Sir Christopher Hatton never to ask that question before?

Puff. What, before the play began? How the plague could he?

Dan. That's true, 'faith!

Puff. But you will hear what he thinks of the matter.

'Sir C. Alas! my noble friend; when I beheld

'Yon tented plains in martial symmetry

'Array'd; when I count o'er yon glittering lines

'Of crested warriors, where the proud steeds neigh,

'And valour-breathing trumpet's shrill appeal

'Responsive vibrates on my list'ning ear;

'When virgin majesty herself I view,

'Like her protecting Pallas veil'd in steel,

'With graceful confidence exhort to arms;

'When, briefly, all I hear or see bears stamp

'Of martial vigilance, and stern defence,

'I cannot but surmise—Forgive, my friend,

'If the conjecture's rash:—I cannot but

'Surmise, the state some danger apprehends!'

Sneer. A very cautious conjecture that.

Puff. Yes, that's his character; not to give an opinion, but on secure grounds; now then.

'Sir W. O, most accomplished Christopher!'

Puff. He calls him by his christian name, to shew that they are on the most familiar terms.

'Sir W. O most accomplish'd Christopher, I find

'Thy staunch sagacity still tracks the future,

'In the fresh print of the o'ertraken past.'

Puff. Figurative!

'Sir W. Thy fears are just.

'Sir C. But where,—whence,—when,—and what

'The danger is,—methinks, I fain would learn.

'Sir W. You know, my friend, scarce two revolving suns,

'And three revolving moons, have clos'd their course,

'Since haughty Phillip, in despite of peace.

With hostile hand hath struck at England's trade.

'Sir C. I know it well.

'Sir W. Phillip, you know, is proud Iberia's king!

'Sir C. He is.

'Sir W. His subjects in base bigotry

'And Catholic oppression held,—while we,

'You know, the Protestant persuasion hold.

'Sir C. We do.

'Sir W. You know beside,—his boasted arma-
'ment,

'The fam'd Armada,—by the Pope baptiz'd,

'With purpose to invade these realms—

'Sir C. Is failed;

Our last advices so report.

'Sir W. While the Iberian admiral's chief hope,

'His darling son—

'Sir C. Ferolo Whiskerandos high—

'Sir W. The same;—by chance a pris'n'er hath
'been ta'en,

'And in this fort of Tilbury—

'Sir C. Is now

'Confin'd—'tis true, and oft from

'top

'I've mark'd the youthful Spaniard's haughty
'mien

'Unconquer'd, tho' in chains.

'Sir W. You also know—

Dan. Mr. Puff, as he knows all this, why does
Sir Walter go on telling him?

Puff. But the audience are not supposed to know
anything of the matter, are they?

Sneer. True; but I think you manage ill: for
there certainly appears no reason why Sir Walter
should be so communicative.

Puff. Fore gad! now, this is one of the most un-
grateful observations I ever heard; for the less in-
ducement he has to tell all this, the more I think
you ought to be obliged to him; for I am sure you'd
know nothing of the matter without it.

Dan. That's very true, upon my word.

Puff. But you will find he was not going on.

'Sir C. Enough, enough,—'tis plain,—and I no
'more

Am in amazement lost!

Puff. Here, now, you see, Sir Christopher did
not, in fact, ask any one question for his own infor-
mation.

Sneer. No, indeed: his has been a most disin-
terested curiosity.

Dan. Really, I find, we are very much obliged to
them both.

Puff. To be sure you are. Now, then, for the
commander-in-chief, the Earl of Leicester; who,
you know, was no favourite but of the queen's.
We left off—in amazement lost!—

'Sir C. Am in amazement lost.—

'But, see where noble Leicester comes! supreme

'In honours and command.

'Sir W. And yet, methinks,

'At such a time, so perilous, so fear'd

'That staff might well become an abler grasp.

'Sir C. And so by heav'n I think I; but
soft:

'He's here!

Puff. Ay! they envy him.

Sneer. But who are those with him?

Puff. O! very vallant knights; one is the go-
vernour of the fort, the other the master of the
horse. And now I think you shall hear some
better language: I was obliged to be plain and
intelligible in the first scene, because there was so
much matter-of-fact in it; but now I'faith! you
have trope, figure, and metaphor, as plentiful as
noun-substantives.

Enter EARL OF LEICESTER, Governor, and
others.

'Leic. How's this, my friends! is't thus your new-
'fledg'd zeal

'And plumed valour moulds in roosted sloth?

'Why dimly glimmers that heroic flame,

'Whose redd'ning blaze by patriot spirit fed,

'Should be the beacon of a kindling realm?

'Can the quick current of a patriot heart,

'Thus stagnate in a cold and weedy converse,

'Or freeze in tideless inactivity?

'No! rather let the fountain of your valour

'Spring thro' each stream of enterprise,

'Each petty channell of conducive daring,

'Till the full torrent of your foaming wrath

'O'erwhelm the flats of sunk hostility!

Puff. There it is,—follow'd up!

'Sir W. No more! The fresh'ning breath of thy
'rebuke

'Hath fill'd the swelling canvas of our souls!

'And thus, tho' fate should cut the cable of

(All take hands.)

'Our topmost hopes, in friendship's closing line

'We'll grapple with despair, and if we fall,

'We'll fall in glory's wake!

'Leic. There spoke Old England's genius!

'Then, are we all resolv'd?

'All. We are;—all resolv'd—

'Leic. To conquer,—or be free?

'All. To conquer,—or be free.

'Leic. All?

'All. All!

Dan. Nem. con. egad!

Puff. O yes, where they do agree on the stage,
their unanimity is wonderful!

'Leic. Then, let's embrace;—and

'Now—

Sneer. What the plague! is he going to pray?

Puff. Yes, hush!—in great emergencies, there is
nothing like a prayer.

'Leic. O mighty Mars!

Dan. But why should he pray to Mars?

Puff. Hush!

'Leic. If in thy homage bred,

'Each point of discipline I've still observ'd;

'Nor but by due promotion, and the right

'Of service, to the rank of major-general

'Have ris'n; assist thy votary now!

'Go. Yet do not rise, hear me!

'Mas. of H. And me!

'Knight. And me!

'Sir W. And me!

'Sir C. And me!

(They all kneel.)

Puff. Now, pray altogether.

'All. Behold thy votaries submissive beg,

'That thou wilt deign to grant them all they ask;

'Assist them to accomplish all their ends,

'And sanctify whatever means they use

'To gain them!

Sneer. A very orthodox quintetto!

Puff. Vastly well, gentlemen. Is that well
managed or not? Have you such a prayer as that
on the stage?

Sneer. Not exactly.

Leic. (To Puff.) But sir, you hav'n't settled how
we are to get off here.

Puff. You could not go off kneeling, could you?

Sir W. (To Puff.) O no, sir! impossible!

Puff. It would have a good effect I'faith, if you
could! 'Exeunt praying! Yes, and would vary
the established mode of springing off with a glance
at the pit.

Sneer. O never mind, so as you get them off, I'll answer for it the audience won't care how.

Puff. Well then, repeat the last line standing, and go off the old way.

'All. And sanctify whatever means they use to gain them.'

Dan. Bravo! a fine exit.

Sneer. Well, really, Mr. Puff—

Puff. Stay a moment. *(The Sentinels get up.)*

'1st. Cen. All this shall to Lord Burleigh's ear,

'2nd. Cen. 'Tis meet it should.

(Exit Sentinels.)
Dan. Eh!—why, I thought these fellows had been asleep?

Puff. Only a pretence: there's the art of it. They were spies of Lord Burleigh's.

Sneer. But isn't it odd, they were never taken notice of, not even by the commander-in-chief?

Puff. O lud! sir, if people who want to listen, or overhear, were not always conniv'd at in a tragedy, there would be no carrying on any plot in the world.

Dan. That's certain.

Puff. But take care, my dear Dangle, the morning gun is going to fire. *(Cannon fires.)*

Dan. Well, that will have a fine effect.

Puff. I think so, and helps to realize the scene. *(Cannon twice.)*—What the plague! three morning guns! There never is but one. Ay! this is always the way at the theatre. Give these fellows a good thing, and they never know when to have done with it. You have no more cannon to fire?

Prom. *(From within.)* No, sir.

Puff. Now then, for soft music.

Sneer. Pray what's that for?

Puff. It shows that Tilburina is coming; nothing introduces you a heroine like soft music. Here she comes.

Dan. And her confidante, I suppose?

Puff. To be sure: here they are;—inconsolable, to the minnet in Ariadne! *(Soft music.)*

Enter TILBURINA and Confidante.

'*Til.* Now has the whispering breath of gentle morn

'Bad nature's voice, and nature's beauty rise;

'While orient Phoebus with unborrow'd hues,

'Clothes the wak'd loveliness which all night slept,

'In heav'nly drapery! Darkness is fled.

'Now flowers unfold their beauties to the sun,

'And blushing, kiss the beam he sends to wake them,

'The strip'd carnation, and the guarded rose,

'The vulgar wallflower, and smart gilly flower,

'The polyanthus mean,—the dapper daisy,

'Sweet william and sweet marjoram,—and all

'The tribe of single and of double pinks!

'Now, too, the feather'd warblers tune their notes

'Around to charm the list'ning grove. The lark!

'The linnet! chaffinch! bullfinch! goldfinch! greenfinch!

'—But, O to me, no joy can they afford!

'Nor rose, nor wallflower, nor smart gilly-flower,

'Nor polyanthus mean, nor dapper daisy,

'Nor william sweet, nor marjoram,—nor lark,

'Linnet, nor all the finches of the grove!'

Puff. Your white handkerchief, madam—

Til. I thought, sir, I wasn't to use that 'till heart-rending woe.'

Puff. O yes, madam. At 'the finches of the grove,' if you please.

'*Til.* Nor lark,

Linnet, nor all the finches of the grove!'

(Weeps.)

Puff. Vastly well, madam!

Dan. Vastly well, indeed!

'*Til.* For, O too sure, heart-rending woe is now

'The lot of wretched Tilburina!

Dan. O!—'tis too much.

Sneer. Oh! It is, indeed.

'*Con.* Be comforted, sweet lady, for who knows

'But heav'n has yet some milk-white day in store?

Til. Alas! my gentle Nora,

'Thy tender youth as yet hath never mourn'd

'Love's fatal dart. Eise would'st thou know, that when

'The soul is sunk in comfortless despair,

'It cannot taste of merriment.'

Dan. That's certain.

'*Con.* But see where your stern father comes;

'It is not meet that he should find you thus.'

Puff. Eh! what the plague!—what a cut is here! Why, what is become of the description of her first meeting with Don Whiskerandos? His gallant behaviour in the sea-fight, and the smile of the canary bird?

Til. Indeed, sir, you'll find they will not be miss'd.

Puff. Very well—Very well!

Til. The cue, ma'am, if you please.

'*Con.* It is not meet that he should find you thus.

Til. Thou counsell'st right, but 'tis no easy task,

'For bare-faced grief to wear a mask of joy.

Enter Governor.

'*Gov.* How's this? In tears? O Tilburina shame!

'Is this a time for maudlin tenderness,

'And Cupid's baby woes? Hast thou not heard

'That haughty Spain's Pope-consecrated fleet

'Advances to our shores, while England's fate,

'Like a clipp'd guinea, trembles in the scale!

Til. Then, is the crisis of my fate at hand!

'I see the fleet's approach!—I see—'

Puff. Now, pray, gentlemen, mind. This is one of the most useful figures we tragedy writers have,

by which a hero or heroine, in consideration of their being often obliged to overlook things that are on the stage, is allow'd to hear and see a number of things that are not.

Sneer. Yes; a kind of poetical second-sight.

Puff. Yes. Now then, madam.

Til. I see their decks

'Are clear'd!—I see the signal made!

'The line is form'd!—a cable's length asunder!

'I see the frigates station'd in the rear;

'And now, I hear the thunder of the guns!

'I hear the victor's shouts;—I also hear

'The vanquish'd groan!—and now 'tis smoke:—and now

'I see the loose sails shiver in the wind!

'I see—I see—what soon you'll see—'

Gov. Hold, daughter! peace! this love hath turn'd thy brain:

'The Spanish fleet thou canst not see—because

'—It is not yet in sight!

Dan. Egad! though, the governor seems to make no allowance for this poetical figure you talk of.

Puff. No, a plain matter-of-fact man;—that's his character.

Til. But will you then refuse his offer?

Gov. I must—I will—I can—I ought—I do.

Til. Think what a noble price.

Gov. No more;—you urge in vain.

Til. His liberty is all he asks.

Sneer. All who asks, Mr. Puff? Who is—

Puff. Egad, sir, I can't tell! Here has been such cutting and slashing, I don't know where they have got to myself.

Til. Indeed, sir, you will find it will connect very well.

—And your reward secure.

Puff. O,—if they hadn't been so devilish free with their cutting here, you would have found that Don Whiskerandos has been tampering for his liberty, and has persuaded Tilburina to make this proposal to her father;—and now, pray observe the consciousness with which the argument is conducted. Egad! the *pro* and *con* goes as smart as hits in a fencing match. It is, indeed, a sort of small-sword logic, which we have borrowed from the French.

Til. A retreat in Spain!

Gov. Outlawry here!

Til. Your daughter's prayer!

Gov. Your father's oath!

Til. My lover!

Gov. My country!

Til. Tilburina!

Gov. England!

Til. A title;

Gov. Honour!

Til. A pension!

Gov. Conscience!

Til. A thousand pounds!

Gov. Ha! thou hast touched me nearly!

Puff. There, you see; she threw in Tilburina, quick, parry carte with England!—Hah! thrust in tierce a title—parried by honour.—Hah! a pension over the arm!—put by conscience. Then flank-onade with a thousand pounds—and a palpable hit, egad!

Til. Canst thou—

Reject the suppliant, and the daughter too?

Gov. No more; I would not hear thee plead in vain:

The father softens, but the governor

is fix'd!

[*Exit.*

Dan. Ay, that antithesis of persons is a most established figure.

Til. 'Tis well,—hence then, fond hopes,

—fond passion, hence;

Duty, behold, I am all over thine—

Whisk. (*Without.*) Where is my love—my—

Til. Ha!

Enter DON WHISKERANDOS.

Whisk. My beauteous enemy!—

Puff. O, dear ma'am, you must start a great deal more than that; consider, you had just determined in favour of duty,—when, in a moment, the sound of his voice revives your passion,—overthrows your resolution destroys your obedience. If you don't express all that in your start, you do nothing at all.

Til. Well, we'll try again!

(*They repeat.*)

Dan. Speaking from within has always a fine effect.

Sneer. Very.

Whisk. My conquering Tilburina! How! is't thus

We meet? Why are thy looks averse! What means

That falling tear,—that frown of boding woe?

Ha! now indeed I am a prisoner!

Yes, now I feel the galling weight of these

Disgraceful chains,—which, cruel Tilburina!

Thy doating captive gloried in before.

But thou art false; and Whiskerandos is undone!

Til. O no; how little dost thou know thy Tilburina!

Whisk. Art thou then true? Begone, cares, doubts and fears;—

I make you all a present to the winds;

And if the winds reject you, try the waves!

Puff. The wind, you know, is the established receiver of all stolen sighs, and cast-off griefs and apprehensions.

Til. Yet must we part?—Stern duty seais our doom:

Though here I call you conscious clouds to witness,

Could I pursue the bias of my soul,

All friends, all right of parents, I'd disclaim,

And thou, my Whiskerandos, should'st be father,

And mother, brother, cousin, uncle, aunt,

And friend to me!

Whisk. O matchless excellence!—and must we part?

Well, if—we must—we must—and in that case

The less is said the better.

Puff. Hey day! here's a cut! What, are all the mutual protestations out?

Til. Now, pray, sir, don't interrupt us just here; you ruin our feelings.

Puff. Your feelings!—but, zounds! my feelings, ma'am!

Sneer. No; pray don't interrupt them.

Whisk. One last embrace—

Til. Now,—farewell for ever.

Whisk. For ever?

Til. Ay, for ever.

(*Going.*)

Puff. 'Sdeath and fury!—Gadslife! sir! madam! if you go out without the parting look, you might as well dance out. Here, here!

Con. But pray, sir, how am I to get off here?

Puff. You, pshaw! what the devil signifies how you get off! edge away at the top, or where you will. (*Pushes the Confidante out.*) Now, ma'am, you see—

Til. We understand you, sir.

Ay. for ever.

Both. Oh! —

[*Turning back. Exit Til. and Whisk.*

Drop Scene.

Enter Under Prompter.

Under P. Sir, the carpenter says it is impossible you can go to the park scene yet.

Puff. The park scene! No; I mean the description scene here, in the wood.

Under P. Sir, the performers have cut it out.

Puff. Cut it out?

Under P. Yes, sir.

Puff. What! the whole account of queen Elizabeth both?

Under P. Yes, sir.

Puff. And the description of her horse and side-saddle?

Under P. Yes, sir.

Puff. So, so; this is very fine indeed! Mr. Hopkins, how the plague could you suffer this?

Prompter. (*From within.*) Sir, indeed the pruning knife—

Puff. The pruning knife? Zounds! the axe! why, here has been such lopping and topping, I sha'n't have the bare trunk of my play left presently. Very well, sir; the performers must do as they please; but upon my soul, I'll print it every word.

Sneer. That I would, indeed.

Puff. Very well, sir! then we must go on. Zounds! I would not have parted with the description of the horse?—Well, sir, go on. Sir, it was one of the finest and most laboured things. Very well, sir, let them go on;—there you had him and his accoutrements from the bit to the crupper. Very well, sir, we must go to the park scene.

Under P. Sir, there is the point:—the carpenters say, that unless there is some business put in here before the drop, they sha'n't have time to clear away the fort, or sink Gravesend and the river.

Puff. So! there is a pretty dilemma, truly! Gentlemen, you must excuse me; these fellows will never be ready, unless I go and look after them myself.

Sneer. O dear sir; these little things will happen.

Puff. To cut out this scene! But I'll print it; egad! I'll print it every word!

Enter a Beef-eater.

'*Beef.* Perdition catch my soul! but I do love thee.'

Sneer. Haven't I heard that line before?

Puff. No, I fancy not. Where, pray?

Dan. Yes, I think there is something like it in Othello.

Puff. Gad! Now you put me in mind on't I believe there is:—but that's of no consequence;—all that can be said is, that two people happened to hit on the same thought,—and Shakspeare made use of it first, that's all.

Sneer. Very true.

Puff. Now, sir, your soliloquy;—but speak more to the pit, if you please;—the soliloquy always to the pit; that's a rule.

'*Beef.* 'Tho' hopeless love finds comfort in despair,

'It never can endure a rival's bliss!

'But soft—I am observ'd.'

[*Exit.*

Dan. That's a very short soliloquy,

Puff. Yes,—but it would have been a great deal longer if he had not been observed.

Sneer. A most sentimental Beef-eater that, Mr. Puff.

Puff. Harkye!—I would not have you be too sure that he is a Beef-eater.

Sneer. What, a hero in disguise?

Puff. No matter;—I only give you a hint. But now for my principal character. Here he comes: Lord Burleigh in person! Pray, gentlemen, step this way; softly—I only hope the Lord High Treasurer is perfect—If he is but perfect—

Enter BURLEIGH, goes slowly to a chair and sits.

Sneer. Mr. Puff!

Puff. Hush! vastly well, sir! vastly well; a most interesting gravity!

Dan. What, isn't he to speak at all?

Puff. Egad! I thought you'd ask me that;—yes, it is a very likely thing,—that a minister in his situation, with the whole affairs of the nation on his head, should have time to talk;—but hush! or you'll put him out.

Sneer. Put him out! how the plague can that be, if he's not going to say anything?

Puff. There's a reason! Why his part is to think,

and how the plague do you imagine he can think if you keep talking?

Dan. That's very true, upon my word!

[*Burleigh comes forward, shakes his head, and exit.*]

Sneer. He is very perfect, indeed. Now pray what did he mean by that?

Puff. You don't take it?

Sneer. No; I don't upon my soul.

Puff. Why, by that shake of the head, he gave you to understand, that even though they had more justice in their cause, and wisdom in their measures, yet, if there was not a greater spirit shewn on the part of the people, the country would at last fall a sacrifice to the hostile ambition of the Spanish monarchy.

Sneer. The devil! Did he mean all that by shaking his head?

Puff. Every word of it;—if he shook his head as I taught him.

Dan. Ah! there certainly is a vast deal to be done on the stage by dumb shew, and expression of face; and a judicious author knows how much he may trust to it.

Sneer. O! here are some of our old acquaintance.

Enter SIR C. HATTON and RALEIGH.

'*Sir C.* My niece, and your niece too!

'By heav'n! there's witchcraft in't. He could not else

'Have gain'd their hearts. But see where they approach;

'Some horrid purpose low'ring on their brows!

'*Sir W.* Let us withdraw and mark them.'

(*They withdraw to the side.*)

Sneer. What is all this?

Puff. Ah! here has been more pruning! But the fact is, these two young ladies are also in love with Don Whiskerandos. Now, gentlemen, this scene goes entirely for what we call situation and stage effect, by which the greatest applause may be obtained, without the assistance of language, sentiment, or character: pray mark!—

Enter the two Nieces.

'*1st Niece.* Ellena here!

'She is his scorn as much as I;—that is

'Some comfort still!

Puff. O dear madam, you are not to say that to her face!—*Aside, ma'am, aside.*—The whole scene is to be *aside.*

'*1st Niece.* She is his scorn as much as I;—that is!

'Some comfort still! (*Aside.*)

'*2d Niece.* I know he prizes not Pollina's love,

'But Tilburina lords it o'er his heart. (*Aside.*)

'*1st Niece.* But see the proud destroyer of my peace.

'Revenge is all the good I've left. (*Aside.*)

'*2d Niece.* He comes, the false disturber of my quiet.

'Now, vengeance, do thy worst. (*Aside.*)

Enter WHISKERANDOS.

'*Whisk.* O, hateful liberty,—if thus in vain

'I seek my Tilburina!

'*Both Nieces.* And ever shalt!

(*Sir Christopher and Sir Walter come forward.*)

'*Both.* Hold! we will avenge you.

'*Whisk.* Hold you; or see your nieces bleed!

(*The two nieces draw their two daggers to strike Whiskerandos; the two uncles at the instant, with their*

two swords drawn, catch their two Nieces' arms, and turn the points of their swords to Whiskerandos, who immediately draws two daggers, and holds them to the two Nieces' bosoms.)

Puff. There's situation for you! there's an heroic group!—You see the ladies can't stab Whiskerandos;—he durst not strike them for fear of their uncles;—the uncles durst not kill him, because of their nieces—I have them all at a dead lock!—for every one of them is afraid to let go first.

Sneer. Why, then, they must stand there for ever.
Puff. So they would, if I hadn't a very fine contrivance for't.—Now mind—

Enter Beef-eater with his halbert.

'*Beef.* In the queen's name! I charge you all to 'drop—
'Your swords and daggers!'

(They drop their swords and daggers.)

Sneer. This is a contrivance; indeed.

Puff. Ay; in the queen's name.

'*Sir C.* Come, niece!

'*Sir W.* Come, niece!

(Exeunt with the two Nieces.)

'*Whisk.* What's he, who bids us thus renounce 'our guard?

'*Beef.* Thou must do more—renounce thy love!

'*Whisk.* Thou liest;—base Beefeater!

'*Beef.* Ha! hell! the lie!

'By heav'n, thou'st rous'd the lion in my heart!

'Off! yeoman's habit!—base disguise! off! off!
(Discovers himself, by throwing off his upper dress; and appears in a very fine waistcoat.)

'Am I—Beefeater now?

'Or beams my crest as terrible as when

'In Biscay's bay I took thy captive sloop!

Puff. There, egad! he comes out to be the captain of the privateer who had taken Whiskerandos prisoner;—and was himself an old lover of Tilburina's.

Dan. Admirably manag'd, indeed.

Puff. Now, stand out of their way.

'*Whisk.* I thank thee, Fortune! that hast thus 'bestow'd

'A weapon to chastise this insolent.

(Takes up one of the swords.)

'*Beef.* I take thy challenge, Spaniard, and I 'thank

'Thee, Fortune, too!

(Takes up the other sword.)

Dan. That's excellently contriv'd! it seems as if the two uncles had left their swords on purpose for them.

Puff. No, egad! they could not help leaving them.

'*Whisk.* Vengeance and Tilburina!

'*Beef.* Exactly so.

(They fight, and after the usual number of wounds given, Whiskerandos falls.)

'*Whisk.* O cursed parry!—that last thrust in 'tierce

'Was fatal. Captain, thou hast fenced well!

'And Whiskerandos quits this bustling scene

'For all eter—*(Dies.)*

'*Beef.*—nity—He would have added, but stern 'death

'Cut short his being, and the noun at once!'

Puff. O, my dear sir, you are too slow.—New mind me.—Sir, shall I trouble you to die again? *(Whisk. rises.)*

Whisk. And Whiskerandos quits this bustling scene

'For all eter—

'*Beef.*—nity—He would have added—

'*Puff.* No, sir, that's not it. Once more, if you please—

Whisk. I wish, sir, you would practise this with-out me: I can't stay dying here all night.

Puff. Very well, we'll go over it by-and-by!—I must humour this gentleman.

(Exit Whisk.)

'*Beef.* Farewell, brave Spaniard! and when next—'

'*Puff.* Dear sir, you needn't speak that speech, as the body has walked off.

'*Beef.* That's true, sir; then I'll join the fleet.

Puff. If you please. *(Exit Beefeater.)* Now, who comes on? Tilburina, stark mad, in white satin.

Sneer. Why, in white satin?

Puff. O Lord! sir,—when a heroine goes mad, she always goes into white satin; don't she Dangle?

Dan. Always; it's a rule.

Puff. Yes; here it is.—*(Looking at the book.)* Enter Tilburina stark mad, in white satin, and her Confidante stark mad, in white linen.'

Enter TILBURINA and her Confidante stark mad, according to costume.

Sneer. But what the dense! is the confidante to be mad too?

Puff. To be sure she is. The confidante is always to do whatever her mistress does; weep when she weeps, smile when she smiles, go mad when she goes mad. Now madam confidante, but keep your madness in the back ground, if you please.

'*Til.* The wind whistles—the moon rises—see,

'They have kill'd my squirrel in his cage!

'Is this a grasshopper?—Ha! no, it is my

'Whiskerandos—you shall not keep him—

'I know you have him in your pocket—

'An oyster may be cross'd in love!—Who says

'A whale's a bird?—Ha! did you call, my love?

'—He's here? He's there!—He's every where!

'Ah me! He's no where.'

(Exeunt Tilburina and Confidante.)

Puff. There! do you ever desire to see any body madder than that?

Sneer. Never while I live!

Puff. You observed how she mangled the metre!

Dan. Yes,—Egad! it was the first thing made me suspect she was out of her senses.

Sneer. And pray what becomes of her?

Puff. She is gone to throw herself into the sea to be sure;—and that brings us at once to the scene of action, and so to my catastrophe,—my sea-tight, I mean.

Sneer. What, you bring that in at last?

Puff. Yes, yes. You know my play is called the *Spanish Armada*; otherwise, egad! I have no occasion for the battle at all. Now then for my magnificence!—my battle!—my noise!—and my procession!—You are all ready?

Prom. *(Within.)* Yes, sir.

Puff. Is the Thames dress?

THE CRITIC; OR, A TRAGEDY REHEARSED.

Enter THAMES with two attendants.

Thames. Here I am, sir.

Puff. Very well indeed. See, gentlemen, there's a river for you!—This is blessing a little of the masque with my tragedy;—a new fancy, you know, and very useful in my case; for as there must be a procession, I suppose Thames and all his tributary rivors to compliment Britannia with a fete in honour of the victory.

Sneer. But pray, who are those gentlemen in green with him?

Puff. Those. Those are his banks.

Sneer. His banks?

Puff. Yes, one crown'd with alders, and the other with a villa!—you take the allusions? But eh! what the plague! you have got both your banks or one side. Here, sir, come round. Ever while you live, Thames, go between your banks.

(Bell rings.) There, so! now for't! Stand aside my dear friends! Away, Thamea!

[Exit Thames between his banks.

(Flourish of drums—trumpets—cannon, &c., &c. Scene changes to the sea—the fleets engage—the music plays 'Britons strike home.'—Spanish fleet destroyed by fire-ships, &c.—English fleet advances music plays 'Rule Britannia.'—The procession of all the English rivers and their tributaries with their emblems, &c., begins with Handel's water music, ends with a chorus, to the march in Judas Maccabees.—During this scene, Puff directs and applauds every thing—then.)

Puff. Well, pretty well;—but not quite perfect; so, ladies and gentlemen, if you please, we'll rehearse this piece again to-morrow. *[Exit]*

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